

POLITICAL ADVERTISING IN THE 2012 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION: HOW
VISUAL AND AURAL TECHNIQUES ARE USED TO CONVEY MEANING

By

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this paper to my parents Dode and Marjean Poston. Their unwavering support from the beginning has been an inspiration. Through all of life's challenges and joys, they have surrounded me with unconditional love. I want to express gratitude to my wife Dora who has been my emotional rock. Without her support, this thesis would not be possible. I want to thank my sister, Jane, and brother, John, and their families for their tireless support.

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ABSTRACT

This paper looked at presidential television advertising in the 2012 U.S. election. The author has undertaken a deep analysis of the way audio and visual elements are used to construct meanings in televised political ads. Meaning is suggested through the visual and aural means of expression available to ad creators.

The organizing principle of this study is information manipulation for the purposes of influencing our perception of candidates and issues. This manipulation was revealed by examining the most prominent visual and aural dimensions within specific ads. The paper identified recurring aural and visual patterns in all the ads and then looked at how meaning is conveyed when the aural and visual dimensions are combined. Framing, priming, and schema theories were used to analyze the ads. After setting forth the theoretical presumptions, this paper connected those theories to specific ads to identify precisely how meanings are constructed. Finally, the larger implication of TV ads on democratic society was also addressed.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The importance of television advertising is undisputed (Graber, 2009; Kaid, 2004; West, 2005). Since 1952 when close to 50% of Americans owned a TV set (Diamond & Bates, 1988), the amount of money spent on television advertising in presidential campaigns has increased dramatically with each election. Ads are the single biggest expenditure in presidential campaigns and the primary means by which a candidate presents a specific message designed to influence voter behavior (West, 2001). Today, it costs hundreds of millions of dollars to launch a successful campaign and with each subsequent election the costs rise substantially. In the 2000 election, presidential candidates, Governor George W. Bush and Vice President Al Gore spent a combined total of \$240 million dollars on TV advertising in the general election (Devlin, 2001). In 2004, a total of \$547 million was spent on TV advertising (Devlin, 2005). It was a similar story in the 2008 contest between U.S. Senator Barack Obama and U.S. Senator John McCain where the total of TV ad spending exceeded that of the 2004 election (Rutenberg, 2008). Another record was set in the 2012 election, where Romney and Obama spent more than a \$1 billion on TV advertising (Gara, 2012).

Candidates for president help to construct their image with the deft use of advertising messaging. TV advertising attempts to build meaning, in part, by manipulating the means of message creation. The “language” of the television advertisement attempts to influence the decisions voters make at the polls (Kaid & Johnston, 2001). For the purpose of this paper, I will expand on the notion that visual

and sound production elements constitute a type of language beyond the text of ads in an attempt to convey to the voter a particular understanding about a candidate. While the text of an ad is not a primary consideration of this paper, words cannot be entirely separated from aural and visual techniques. Typically, words work to complement and reinforce the visual and aural message. An ad's meaning is best understood when words are considered in combination with aural and visual dimensions.

A viewer's understanding of a TV ad is influenced heavily by culture. Broadly speaking, culture is the venue where knowledge is understood socially. In attempting to negotiate meaning with the viewer, the creator of the political ad attempts to exploit common cultural values and beliefs (Steele & Redding, 1962; Richardson, 2000). For example, vocal and visual distortion in black and white amplifies a common cultural reference point for the perception of danger. That is, these techniques help to raise suspicion about a candidate.

The importance of understanding the meaning behind advertising cannot be understated. Television advertising is the primary means by which voters gain knowledge about a candidate or issue (Brians & Wattenberg, 1996; Geske, 2009; Hansen & Benoit, 2002; Jamieson, 1996; Patterson & McClure, 1976). In their book *The Unseeing Eye*, Patterson and McClure (1976) were among the first to find that voters exposed to political advertising increase their knowledge of issues significantly when compared to voters not exposed to ads. In their research on the impact of media sources on candidate knowledge, Brians and Wattenberg (1996) found that political advertising both positively and negatively contributes to voter knowledge of candidates and issues.

Jamieson (1996) also suggested that ads provide information for the voter, even more than television news broadcasts.

Much of the money that goes into a campaign is used to take full advantage of the visual and sound techniques available to ad creators. These visual and aural techniques provide a type of “grammar” (Jamieson, 1992, p. 50) or symbolic language that helps the viewer construct meaning. The non-text elements help viewers develop a certain understanding about a given candidate’s character or image. Whether this constructed reality is successful in motivating voters to choose one candidate over another is beyond the purview of this paper. This paper is an explanation of how TV advertising attempts to build meaning using visual and aural techniques.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Foundations

One of the important scholars in our understanding of the fluid nature of language is Ferdinand de Saussure. His ideas later became known as semiotics, which puts language (signs) at the center of what constitutes reality. According to Saussure, Bally, Sechehaye, Riedlinger, and Baskin, (1966), language is not something that is secondary or peripheral to knowledge but central to it. In describing the contributions of Saussure et al., (1966) one of his translators put it this way: “Words are the collective products of social interaction and essential instruments through which human beings constitute and articulate their reality” (Harris, 1988, p. 245). Hall (1997) offers an additional understanding of the fluid nature of language by asserting that words have no fixed meaning. The linguistic observations of Saussure et al., (1966) may be applied to the visual and aural idiom of TV ads. That is, while words form a language that articulates reality, pictures and sounds are also included as an important additional language that constitutes reality. The central aim of this paper is to identify how visual and aural techniques are manipulated to construct meaning. To paraphrase Saussure et al., (1966), visual and aural techniques are “essential instruments” for constituting reality.

While Saussure contributes important knowledge about constituting reality with words, there is another important cognitive component to understanding reality. One way to organize the vast amount of information humans need to make sense of the world is

through schemata or mental categories of information (Wood, 2012). Schemata are a type of memory which produces a picture in the mind so that when individuals are confronted with new information they have a point of reference for assigning meaning to that information (Bartlett, 1932). Ultimately, schemata provide a context for understanding. TV ad creators seek to exploit schemas so that voters will have a point of reference in which to conceptualize a presidential candidate. For example, ads run by Obama in the summer of 2012 exploited schemas people had about Romney being an out of touch millionaire.

One specific type of schema is the stereotype. These are predictive generalizations about people and situations. Communication thinker and journalism pioneer Walter Lippmann (1922) writes about stereotypes: “This then, will be the clue to our inquiry. We shall assume that what each man does is based not on direct and certain knowledge, but on pictures made by himself or given to him” (p. 25). These cognitive shortcuts explained by Lippmann (1922) and Bartlett (1932) can be skillfully exploited in advertising visuals and sound to send and evoke a memorable understanding about a candidate.

Ad creators have a tremendous range of choices by which they can manipulate meaning. Through an understanding of framing theory, priming, schema theory, and the full range of visual and aural techniques, the meaning of an ad becomes more predictable.

Framing Theory

Framing theory has its roots in cognitive psychology, anthropology, sociology, economics, communication science, political communication, public relations and health communication (Van Gorp, 2007). In the context of media messages, Gamson and

Modigliani (1989) say framing can be seen as narrative or storyline adding that framing is a creative process and a “symbolic contest over which interpretation will prevail” (p. 2). For the purposes of this paper, I will narrow the concept of framing down to several key ideas that have immediate application to a richer understanding of advertising messages.

Framing can be thought of as a cognitive shortcut to alleviate the voter of the heavy burden of having to do a complete analysis of each and every candidate. Media frames offer a vehicle for the expression of ideas. Kinder and Nelson (2005) noted that “frames supply a common vocabulary that enable elites and citizens to take part in the same conversation” (p. 116). Furthermore, framing makes certain ideas more prominent in memory and give those thoughts a privileged position (Kinder & Sanders, 1996). In TV ads, specific visual and aural techniques are invoked as the “common vocabulary” for understanding a candidate. The frame for a candidate can be compared to a painting. For example, a painter uses line, color, light, and perspective to represent reality and suggest an interpretation. Framing theory in TV ads works in a similar way in that the ad creator is using visual and aural means to suggest a particular meaning.

Scholars have developed a number of useful ways for conceptualizing the framing concept. Robert Entman (1993) describes the concept of framing within a text:

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. (p. 52)

The four key steps in the framing process are: problem, cause, evaluation, and remedy. A prominent historical event exemplifies the framing process well. After the 9/11 attacks,

the Bush administration *defined* the event as a terrorist attack against the United States. Al Qaeda terrorists *caused* the attack. Furthermore, the 9/11 attackers were *evaluated* by the framer as “evil-doers.” In the last step in Entman’s (1993) framing paradigm, there should be a *remedy*. In the case of 9/11, the Bush administration said the *remedy* was for America to invade Afghanistan and Iraq (Entman, 2004). While Entman (1993) focuses on text, many TV ads contain some or all of Entman’s four framing characteristics. As it relates to visual and aural techniques, framing amplifies the ad’s central narrative by emphasizing certain key points. The key points are expressed in terms of stating the problem, the cause, the evaluation, and the remedy.

Priming Theory

Scholars debate the precise meaning of priming. For some, it is a term that is interchangeable with framing (Chong & Druckman, 2007). For others, priming is related to framing but there are subtle distinctions between the two. Iyengar and Kinder (1987) were among the first to develop the notion of priming as distinct from framing:

By calling attention to some matters while ignoring others, TV news influences the standards by which governments, presidents, policies, and candidates for public office are judged. Priming refers to changes in the standards that people use to make political evaluations. (p. 63)

Iyengar and Kinder (1987) found news coverage encouraged the viewer to evaluate a given candidate based on what the news story said was important. The idea of priming could apply to television advertising as well, in that the creators of the message are presenting the standards by which the voter will judge the candidate.

West (2005) used the term priming to describe the process by which the audience point of reference for evaluating a candidate can be influenced greatly by TV advertising:

In the media era, TV provides some of the most accessible material. By its patterns of coverage and emphasis on particular information, the electronic medium plays a significant role in influencing the standards of evaluation used in voter's selection of candidates. (p. 127)

That is, through priming in an ad, a specific issue or image is brought to the forefront and becomes the standard by which a viewer judges a candidate. West (2005) elaborated on this notion when he suggested voters use available cues rather than relying on a comprehensive and thorough understanding of the candidate's positions.

For the purposes of this paper, priming will refer to the process whereby visual and aural techniques help to make ideas about candidates more prominent. These ideas become the criteria by which a candidate is to be evaluated.

Visual and Aural Techniques

Visual and Aural TV production techniques are the means by which ads are constructed. Just as an amorphous lump of clay must be shaped into something recognizable, voter opinions of a given candidate must also emerge through a willful construction of visual and aural symbols to convey meaning. The process of constructing meaning is fluid and dynamic giving much creative discretion to ad creators. Berger and Luckmann (1967) argued in their book, *The Social Construction of Reality*, that knowledge is not fixed for any one person. It is always in the process of being created or constructed.

Various dimensions or filters through which ideas are presented visually and aurally have been identified in this paper. The following is a list of some of these dimensions and a brief explanation of the literature that describes them in detail. This is not an exhaustive list, rather it is a list of the most commonly used dimensions identified in an examination of political ads. They are: the use of camera, special effects, editing, graphics, and music.

Use of Camera

In order to assign specific meaning to a candidate, camera position matters. Strength, authority, power, weakness, and inferiority are suggested to the viewer through camera position and distance. Camera position and distance determine whether the shot is a close-up, medium or long shot (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1991). Close-ups force the audience to select a detail that otherwise might have been missed which creates more emotional involvement (Kaid & Davidson, 1986; Kaid & Dimitrova, 2005). Television's close-ups also provide viewers with a complex range of verbal and non-verbal material that can provoke unexpected emotional responses.

A given angle can portray warmth and intimacy. Low camera angles, such as looking up at the candidate, may produce feelings of dominance and importance, while a high angle forces the viewer to look down, perhaps associating a feeling of weakness and importance to the candidate. When viewed from above, the subject of the shot is more likely to be seen as a victim. However, when viewed from above, the subject will be seen as more ominous (Kaid & Davidson, 1986; Dancyger, 1997).

There are several camera perspectives that are utilized frequently in ads. The three, according to Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1991), are reportorial, objective and

subjective. The reportorial perspective is a straight-on shot where the candidate looks directly into the camera. This projects sincerity. The objective perspective, used in TV dramas and sitcoms, is where the subject ignores the camera, while the subjective perspective substitutes the camera for a person. The scene is viewed through the eyes of the participant. When compared to the other perspectives, the subjective perspective is more likely to emotionally involve the viewer as an “active participant” in the scene.

Camera movement encourages identification and implies change. This occurs when the entire camera is trucked, or physically moves. It suggests urgency and gives a TV ad a dynamism that might be absent with a static camera (Dancyger, 1997). Even the position of the candidate in the screen or screen symmetry, may have an effect. The right side of the screen attracts more attention whereas the left side has been seen as the weaker position (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1991). In some spots, the candidate is compressed against the edge of the frame. The lack of lead space in front of the candidate may create tension for the viewers (R. Rudd, personal communication, February, 23, 2013). Jamieson (1992) pointed out that camera angles, distance, and perspective combine together to elicit an emotional response (Jamieson, 1992).

Special Effects

Special effects include any electronic manipulation of visual or aural phenomena as a vehicle for transmitting meaning to an audience. These can be accomplished through distortions, colors, and sound effects. By altering the pictures and sounds, a TV ad can grab a listener and allow the message creator to capture attention in a more focused and precise manner. This, in turn, may change or reinforce ideas about a candidate.

Distortion alters a given reality by visual and aural means (Kaid, 1996). An example of distortion is unnatural sound alteration. Jamieson (1992) claimed that sound distortions affect our subconscious and make it less likely that we can process the information sensibly and rationally. Jamieson (1992) also noted, “Once these defenses are gone, a persuasive message that might otherwise have been challenged or rejected can slip by. Persuasion without the benefit of analytic scrutiny of the message is the result” (p. 60). Other types of distortion include color variation, compressed sound, slow or fast motion, use of film, lighting variations, superimposition, blurred focus, screen asymmetry, dissolves, fades and graphics (Brader, 2006; Jamieson, 1992; Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1991; Kaid & Davidson, 1986; Noggle & Kaid, 2000).

As a special effect, color is used to convey meaning. By changing the color, producers of ads can suggest emotional responses based on cultural cues about the meaning of color. For example, producers will use bright colors versus the absence of color to associate character qualities. Using black and white pictures, can heighten awareness, suggest character qualities implying nefarious motives, and make the picture more interesting (Brader, 2006). Color signals to the viewer an emotional response the viewer may be unaware of. Bright colors provide the exact opposite response from black and white (Brader, 2006). Color photos may add to a candidate’s humanity while a black and white image may be less complementary depending on the context (Dancyger, 1997).

Sound effects reflect reality in ways that visual images do not. Happy sounds, such as applause and laughter, may produce feelings of pride whereas fear and anger can be projected with negative sound effects, such as a siren, chaotic crowd noises, or a baby crying. Sound functions to authenticate a particular reality through aural means and can

provide information, energize an ad, create a type of musical rhythm, and establish mood. Sound surprises the listener to create a feeling of irony or contradiction and helps to identify time and place. For example, shouting crowds and blaring sirens signal a chaotic environment. Sound also emotionally conditions the audience for the intervention, arrival, or actions of a particular character (Brader, 2006; Price, 2011). For example, the use of sirens can put the viewer in an anxious state of mind at the point in which the candidate “arrives” in a TV ad. Sound works to connect several scenes. As Dancyger (1997) put it, “Sound foreshadows disaster. Sound supports the dramatic core. Sound punctuates. It makes it more realistic. Over-modulated sound creates a violent and realistic effect” (p. 227). Moreover, sound effects must be reconciled with the visual and textual components of an ad. Consequently, the viewer of the ad will make sense of it when the sound and pictures complement and reinforce the message.

Editing

Editing involves making choices about the order and duration of pictures and sounds. Personalities, character, a sense of urgency, and information can all be projected through the skillful choices employed by editors. Broadly speaking, editing creates audience involvement. The moment at which new visual and aural information is introduced is an opportunity to whet the appetite of viewers and invite them to ponder a new idea. Conversely, the edit is a way to reinforce or emphasize a point. Either way, the change grabs attention and signals to the viewer that more is to come. In the words of Dancyger (1997), “A cut is a promise of more information or more dramatic insight to come” (p. 297).

Pacing of the cuts refers to the speed and frequency at which new information is revealed through the use of technology and has an important function in TV ads. The strategy of speeding or slowing down the pace of an ad is a way to heighten or intensify emotion. For example, a series of very quick scene cuts could convey pride and enthusiasm (Jamieson, 1992). Quick cuts also create tension, expectations, energy and excitement (Brader, 2006; Kaid & Davidson, 1986). It is possible to focus the viewer in ways that reinforce a candidate's image and to create excitement around the candidate through editing (Kaid & Davidson, 1986).

A montage, arranged by the editor, helps to establish mood and give the viewer a visual storyline. Montage is a "compilation of images" or the order, composition, and timing of pictures as they are presented to the viewer. The arrangement or order of pictures and sound can have a vast influence on interpretation (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984). Typically, the montage will focus on a particular theme, person, or idea using images, color, sounds and lighting which are connected to each other through editing technology (Dancyger, 1997, p. 364). The slow dissolving from one still photo to another is a common montage tactic. Montage has a musical quality that can evoke emotion if it is well done, because the series of pictures in a montage act together to create a more holistic message with deeper meaning. The sum of the shots will act on one's emotions in ways that each individual shot does not. For example, negative associations can be suggested through montage by suggesting a storyline that evokes heartache. A montage, when combined with other special effects such as slow motion and color, may persuade a viewer to contemplate the image more intently. Montage may be an effective vehicle for revealing a character or idea more sympathetically.

The use of incongruent sound with video is a common way for a director to construct a specific understanding about a candidate. Incongruency is the process by which pictures and sounds communicate a jolting dissonance for the viewer. Typically, sound and pictures complement one another, but occasionally, this process is intentionally disrupted. While the announcer expresses a hostile message about a given candidate, the director will insert a negative image of the ad target. The incongruent image and voice track, when combined, portrays the ad target negatively. The same effect can also be achieved by juxtaposing two contradictory pictures. According to Dancyger (1997), “The shots don’t necessarily provide continuity; the contradiction between shots alters the meaning of the scene” (p. 316). When the picture or sound appears out of place, the editor can influence how a candidate is understood. Sound also suggests incongruency. Dancyger (1997) said, “The replacement of expected sound with a sound effect that shifts meaning to the opposite extreme and alters the effect of the visual-sound juxtaposition” (p. 331). These discordant juxtapositional images and sounds can be expressed through music, sound effects, editing, camera angle, color and graphics to create an overall impression.

Graphics

Graphics appear in many ads to dramatize alarming statistics and to provide visual contrast to more subjective elements. What is said is often confirmed with graphics to provide a double-punch of pseudo-authenticity. How a graphic is built and revealed makes a difference in how it is understood. With a graphic of a fractured dollar bill, how it is shaped, sized, colored, and presented on-screen helps to send a specific message.

Graphics can express urgency and impart a feeling of credibility that comes from the assurance that the matter being discussed is numerical and factual (Brader, 2006).

Music

Music helps to shape the meaning of TV ads. According to Hansen (1989), music in TV ads is the primary means by which an emotional connection is made with the listener (as cited in Timmerman et al., 2008, pp. 303-324). One reason for this is that music expresses the full range of human emotion. How notes are constructed and played may bring out emotions of regret, angst, anger, alienation, joy, and determination; virtually any range of emotion can be found by simply selecting among available musical options (Timmerman et al., 2008). Music in TV ads serves as an essential device for conveying meaning (Brader, 2006).

Western tonal harmony, as explained by Piston (1962), is the foundation of most music heard in the media. Harmony consists of the basic rules about the arrangement of notes played in succession (melody) and notes played at the same time (chords). Typically, the arrangement of notes and chords reflect one of two scales with each consisting of seven notes: the minor scale and the major scale. At any point in a composition, the composer may deviate from the seven note scale to produce dissonance. Piston (1962) stated, “A dissonant interval sounds unstable, calling for resolution into a consonant interval” (p. 15). The essential quality of dissonance is to create a sense of movement. For instance, the resolution of a dissonant chord into a major chord produces a favorable reaction (Houston & Haddock, 2007). Through common practice over many centuries, Western harmonic rules have provided a common reference point for listeners irrespective of the musical ability of the listener (Piston, 1962).

When hearing music in a TV ad, listeners develop harmonic and melodic expectations and this, in turn, affects their emotional involvement with a TV ad. For example, a minor chord may cause one to feel sadness. Conversely, Houston and Haddock (2007) found that major chord melodies are associated with a positive mood. In their study, Brattico, Jacobson, De Baene, Glerean, and Tervaniemi (2010) found that when chords are “broken” with unexpected harmony and melody, tension is generated. These terms roughly correspond to Piston’s (1962) explanation of consonant and dissonant chords. Musical tension is a common feature of TV ads.

Furthermore, music can suggest ideas about candidates that transcend rationale scrutiny. Hansen (1989) suggested that music awakens a primal instinct with strong non-cognitive effects on viewers (as cited in Timmerman et al., 2008, pp. 303-324). Music engages the listener in ways that words do not. Music makes the listener feel something which helps to inspire pictures in their heads where they ponder ideas more deeply (Dancyger, 1997; Jolij & Meurs, 2011).

The human voice is a musical instrument that employs all the elements of sound such as rhythm, melody, tempo, pitch and rate. Voice-overs play an important role in TV ads. When combined into language, this musical instrument can have a similar effect on the listener in terms of establishing an emotional connection. For example, when speaking with a depressed person, mood congruency is established when the speaker slows down and speaks more softly (Houston & Haddock, 2007). This is a common tactic found in TV ads to identify and align the emotional state of the speaker with the message of the ad.

In the context of political advertising music draws people in, increases familiarity, sets the mood and has a positive effect on memory (Devlin, 2001; Diamond & Bates, 1988; Kaid & Davidson, 1986; Sabato, 1981; Thorson & Christ, 1991). According to Jamieson (1992), music increases attention, improves memory and invites a specific emotional response. Music can “shade and shape our response to a candidate, issues, or both” (Jamieson, 1992, p. 51). Music is central to ad effectiveness, carries emotion, and increases the effect of the visuals (Brader, 2006; Graber, 2009; West, 2001)

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

A qualitative method was used for this study. A qualitative approach has particular value in understanding visual and aural means of expression. Moreover, qualitative research is a way to more deeply reflect on how people, through the text of advertising, construct and interpret realities (Geske, 2009). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), “The aim and function of qualitative inquiry is to understand the meaning of human action (creating TV advertising) by describing the inherent or essential characteristics of social objects or human experience” (as cited in Jackson, Drummond, & Camara, 2007, pp. 23). Likewise, with a qualitative approach, an in-depth examination is possible into the specific processes by which meaning is conveyed in an ad through the manipulation of visual and aural elements. When combined together, these elements, such as camera and special effects, help to construct an overall message that is not possible if the elements are considered in isolation.

With qualitative research goals in mind, I gathered all of the presidential television ads sponsored by the Republican candidate Mitt Romney and Democrat candidate Barack Obama as provided by Stanford University on their website, *Political Communication Lab*. The lab is housed within the Institute for Communication Research, the research arm of the Department of Communication at Stanford University. The ads are made available to the public. The paper focused on the ads sponsored by the candidates and excluded ads from third parties or independent groups.

These ads aired during the period of time known as the general election. This period began at the end of the Democrat National Convention on September 4, 2012. At this time both the Republican and Democrat campaigns were officially launched. The general election continued through Election Day on Tuesday, November 6, 2012.

This study focuses on the visual and sound techniques employed by ad creators to introduce a candidate to the viewers. Lynda Lee Kaid (2004) describes this process of politicians presenting themselves visually and aurally to an audience as “video style.” From the list of TV ads provided by the Political Communication Lab, I selected some of the most striking examples of visual and aural techniques used in the ads (see Appendix for brief description of these ads). The ads studied here must have aired at least once. The ads manifested the characteristics worthy of our analysis and attention.

While the use of visual and aural techniques in ads is the primary focus of this study, the text of an ad often provides the necessary context for why a particular dimension was utilized. When visual, aural, and textual information is seen in combination, one develops a much clearer understanding of an ad.

The small sample in this study should suffice in describing and explaining the advertising content in more detail, whereas a sample in the hundreds or thousands would not leave room for the thorough analysis I intend to undertake.

To get a better understanding of video style, I watched all of the ads from the Romney and Obama campaigns from the general election period multiple times. I looked for visual and aural techniques that were particularly striking in terms of how effectively they conveyed a precise understanding about a candidate or issue. First, I watched each visual and aural dimension one at a time to better understand how a specific technique

was used. For example, I looked at the special effect of color, noting what color was used, where it was used, how it was presented, what other colors were used as contrast, and what meaning it conveyed about the candidate or issue. Second, after familiarizing myself with the specific technique, I watched the same ads with an eye towards understanding how all the dimensions worked together to communicate the ads' meaning. For example, in one ad I analyzed, music, graphics, and sound effects expressed a very clear message that a single dimension could not.

Within the broad category of a politician's video style we will look at the specific methods of persuasion in TV ads through the lens of five common dimensions where meaning is projected. They are: 1) camera, 2) special effects, 3) editing, 4) graphics, and 5) music.

Finally, this study will attempt to go beyond simply identifying how specific dimensions are used in isolation, to identify the overall meaning of an ad when all of the dimensions are combined.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

I will now embark on a detailed analysis that will reveal how visual and aural dimensions are manipulated to create meaning. The analysis will include detailed examples within each ad to illustrate the dimension. The analysis will include only the most striking examples of visual and aural techniques. Therefore, some of the dimensions that are not as important as others will be ignored. An equally important goal will be to identify how the dimensions work together to express ideas in individual ads. Finally, I will identify what commonalities exist within *all* the ads. (see Appendix for a more expansive description of the ads being analyzed)

Mitt Romney, November 4, 2012, “Bigger Better”

“Bigger Better” is a tribute to Romney. It was shot on location at a campaign stop in Ohio, in which large crowds of supporters are seen cheering as Romney is heard speaking about his vision for America. The ad portrays Romney as a positive, warm, and powerful leader.

Camera

Use of cameras to convey meaning is a particularly useful way to frame a candidate, both figuratively and literally. As Entman (1993) has pointed out, framing, as a general theoretical concept, is about making more salient certain information in a given text. Likewise, camera framing serves a similar purpose by providing a boundary of

information, selecting a particular point of view for the audience. Since reality, in all its complexity, can be seen from multiple perspectives, the camera angle and distance are tools in which a talented director can choose a common set of visual perspectives. As Johnson-Cartee & Copeland (1991) have noted, the camera is often used to confer positive energy, popularity and strength, onto the subject matter. These qualities are manifested in “Bigger Better.” Specifically, the tracking camera, well above the crowds, infers a forward moving energy dynamic suggesting political momentum is underway. The wide shots of the large, cheering audience, captures the mood of popular support. What’s more, close-ups of a smiling Romney, shown either from below or at eye level, imparts a feeling of a leader with a commanding presence.

Objective Perspective

Throughout this ad, the objective camera perspective is utilized. It is an effective way to impart character qualities because this perspective puts the viewer into the less threatening position of observer and witness to history as opposed to being an active participant. The objective camera helps to guide the audience to view the scene in a particular way. This perspective allows the viewer to be a silent witness to the campaign stop in Ohio. By looking on from some distance, the perspective produces a sober assessment of the event, which gives the audience the freedom to conclude that Romney is a powerful force for good without direct prompting. By contrast, a subjective perspective would force the viewer into being a direct participant in what is happening.

Moving Camera

In the opening sequence of this ad, the camera shows a crowd lining a country road at sunset. The camera moves in a tracking shot over the crowd. As Dancyger (1997) noted in his research, a moving camera generates excitement. In this specific ad, the high horizontal tracking of the camera does seem to generate feelings of excitement, urgency and change. Watching from above, the audience confirms Romney's popularity with an added message that the urgent change coming to America is Romney's election.

Stationary Camera

A stationary camera is used for some of the crowd scenes and sets the geographical boundaries of the scene. When a stable camera is contrasted with the moving camera, the two have the effect of suggesting predictability and change. Romney is not seen until the 26 second mark from a stationary, eye-level, medium length camera angle, when he delivers the following inspiring line, "With the right leadership, America is coming roaring back." The contrast from the camera movement to stability gives the viewer a chance to emotionally "breathe." One is encouraged to ponder the steady shot more intently and to consider Romney as a resolute person with unremitting steadiness.

Long shot

In conjunction with the tracking camera above the crowd, there is a long shot camera angle in the opening sequence. A long shot from above serves as an establishing shot, allowing the director the ability to begin exploring the details of the shot. Later in the ad, long shots from above showing a large stage surrounded on three sides by the audience are used to introduce other Republican speakers at the rally. The use of distance

suggests they are not in the forefront but important background figures that animate the gathering with rally rhetoric and provide necessary context and credibility. The message of long shots seems twofold. On the one hand, keeping these leaders at a distance sets the stage for more intimate close-ups of Romney and signals to the audience that these other players, while important figures, are clearly peripheral to the lead character. The longer distance creates emotional distance so the important supporting actors are revealed as important in the grand scheme of things but not so important that the viewer establishes an emotional bond with them. On the other hand, the longer shots act as a foreshadowing device to build suspense and give the viewer a hint of what is to come. Finally, the longer shots suggest unanimity in purpose. Americans are all in it together and can swim with Romney or sink. Great things can be accomplished only by working in concert. A long camera distance encompassing a vast crowd works to imply this strength.

Close-ups

The viewer sees variations on the crowd scenes with long shots followed by closer camera distances throughout the ad. Researchers, such as Jamieson (1992), have pointed out that closer camera distances in TV ads create an emotional connection. In “Bigger, Better,” the closer distances accomplish this by inserting close-ups of Romney after longer shots. The effect is more emotional involvement with him. As Kaid (2004) has noted in prior research, close-ups create warmth and intimacy with the audience and really act to limit other parts of this unfolding picture. The close-up camera strategy increases the power of framing by selecting for the viewer a more intimate view of Romney. The viewer has much less freedom to choose to look at something else.

Otherwise, the audience might miss what this narrative is all about which is, of course, Romney. Ultimately, close-ups are where significant meaning is diffused to the audience. The creator of the ad appears to say that Romney is not some distant figure who is out of touch with mainstream America. By using close-ups of Romney at eye-level, the ad creator prioritizes a particular view of Romney by emphasizing his alert, smiling face. This portrays him as a warm and caring individual who can be trusted in the face of economic peril. In this specific case, the close-ups which reveal Romney as a friendly figure compensate for the negative perception of the candidate as an aloof figure.

Over the Shoulder

In a brief span toward the end of the piece, Romney is seen at eye level from behind in an over the shoulder stationary camera from a medium distance. In this way, the viewer literally and figuratively sees the same vision for America as Romney does. The angle pulls in the audience and helps them to be more personally and emotionally involved with the candidate. Through the use of camera angles, distance and focus, the ad creator is invoking an overall theme of the conquering hero with a bold new vision for America.

Editing

Shot Arrangement

The arrangement and order of the camera angle choices seem to suggest a narrative that is building and growing to a climax throughout the commercial. For example, when the ad begins with a tracking shot at sunset showing the adoring crowds lined alongside the rural highway, there is a hint that something big is about happen. The

mixing of close-ups with long shots combines to help create expectancy. A pleasurable tension mounts as the audience waits to see what happens next. The pictures and sounds inexorably lead to a resolution toward the end of the piece where Romney is the focus. The suspense is ended with close-ups of a happy Romney.

Music

The overall theme of strength is underscored throughout the ad with a forward moving tonal progression interspersed with moments of the percussive sounds of a beating drum. Major chords, which are associated with happy feelings, are used throughout the production to convey a sense of normalcy and satisfaction.

In the opening 16 seconds, a degree of pleasurable tension is generated with notes plucked on stringed instruments in a percussive pattern that suggests more is to come. Under Romney's words, "Better days are ahead...and unshakeable faith in the American spirit," the music complements the words by also building expectancy. The beating drums set the stage for what is to come later in the ad.

At the 16 second point, while brass instruments are introduced in a more lyrical downward melodic progression, Romney rhetorically asks, "If there is anyone who thinks America's best days are behind them?" The downward line serves to signal to the audience a measure of gravitas and importance as the audience contemplates Romney's words. There is a brief return to plucked chords and then a strong brass line playing in a lower register is reintroduced under the words, "I have a clear and unequivocal message...America is coming roaring back." The brass instruments, now moving upward, crescendo to a climax at the words "roaring back."

After the climax, long notes are sustained until the end of the piece. Longer notes versus random percussive sounds are much more decisive and unequivocal which helps to punctuate the strong leader theme. At the 54 second mark, there is a tight close-up of Romney saying, “And I know we can’t lose on Tuesday, I need your help,” while the familiar percussive sounds return to emphasize the line. The return to the slightly tentative and unresolved plucked sounds may be to suggest that the ultimate resolution is to vote.

Summary

“Bigger Better” is a tribute ad where music and pictures portray Romney as a strong, popular leader with a vision for America. The use of camera and music serve a priming function. When ad creators make camera decisions they are choosing some of the standards by which the viewer will judge Romney. The use of long shots and moving camera sets a standard of popularity by which the viewer will more favorably evaluate the candidate. Viewers are cued to see an archetypal leader with a commanding presence who is capable of leading the people into the future. The long shots were interspersed with close-ups reserved mostly for Romney to establish an emotional connection with the viewer. The music served to punctuate the words of Romney, build expectation, and add to the overall narrative of urgency and change. When all the triumphant musical elements are combined with the camera shots, the message of Romney as a strong leader with a vision for America is unequivocal. Warmth and intimacy mixed with urgency, change, cultural cohesion and patriotism imbue this ad from start to finish.

Barack Obama, October 13, 2012, “Challenges”

In this positive ad, narrated by Morgan Freeman, the ad creator uses still photos to advance a narrative that suggests while the challenges for Obama have been great and there is more to do, the worst thing would be to turn back. The ad reveals Obama as a serious, problem-solving president who has persevered in spite of the challenges.

Camera

This ad uses camera angles from still photos. Photos suggest both gravitas and permanence in ways that moving pictures do not. A fixed image appears more authentic, sincere and straightforward. Photos inspire the viewer to ponder the truth of a moment captured in time and to reflect more deeply on its meaning. The more ephemeral nature of moving pictures, on the other hand, vitiates deeper contemplation. Photos in this TV ad effectively encapsulate the image of Obama as a serious leader addressing challenges and moving the country in a positive direction.

With the exception of one side angle camera shot of Obama in the Oval office, everyone is seen from behind. On the one hand, this tactic, as opposed to a more mundane straight on shot, signals to the audience the subject matter is of great consequence. On the other hand, seeing everyone from the side or from behind places the viewer in the scene thus creating a stronger sense of identification with Obama and other photo subjects.

Opening Wide Shot

The audience is looking at a wide, eye-level camera shot of the president’s desk in the Oval Office. While the office is empty of people, all of the trappings of the office are

visible. This shot has placed the audience in the inner sanctum so the viewer becomes a participant in the story. The notable absence of people in the room indicates the dignity and respect which Americans associate with this office. The emptiness of the Oval Office communicates the loneliness of the job and, at the same time, urges the audience to contemplate the gravity of the situation facing the president. The pictures, desk, and the accoutrements of the office set off by a straight shot and eye-level camera height imply permanence as opposed to ephemerality. Through the camera lens, it is apparent that whoever occupies this office carries a tremendous burden.

Over the Shoulder

In a series of photos, seen mostly from behind the subject, the viewer is looking into the future. While the audience watches from behind, Obama is getting ready to begin an important journey as he prepares to address his inauguration audience. This photo puts the audience in Obama's shoes. When Obama is seen from behind, the image conveys a sense of power in addition to the loneliness which accompanies the responsibilities of the office. Plus, the over the shoulder angle gives one the sense that Obama, along with the viewer, is looking into the future.

The emotional distance achieved with the over the shoulder angles seems to be a hedge against an accusation that many individuals are not feeling the recovery. In the ensuing shots, a group of New York City firefighters are seen from behind, cheering at the declaration of Osama bin Laden's death revealed on a large neon sign. Later, photos seen from behind, reveal a family walking away, a car assembly worker, a young child holding up her hand in a classroom, and a group of men erecting the wall of a house. The approach of looking from behind places the viewer in the scene watching the various

stories unfold with the photo subjects. This serves to make the matter more personal and relevant. The angles from behind are also more intimate in that the viewer is privileged to be participating in these important private moments. The snap-shot images appear to be un-staged moments. Their usage counters the cynical notion that the people in the photos are phony actors in a crass television production. The photos seek to heighten authenticity.

The shots from behind may serve several additional purposes. One purpose is to establish the gravity of situation facing the president. A second purpose is to broaden the subject matter. For example, the viewer sees a young girl in a classroom raising her hand. If the director had chosen a simple straight on shot of the girl, the message would have changed to her narrow environment. The shot from behind the girl enlarges the discussion to the state of education in America.

Low Camera Angle

The use of a low camera angle as Obama is seen leaving the capitol building walking outdoors for his inauguration speech has the effect of aggrandizing his power. Not only does this shot enlarge his presence, it suggests that he is moving the country forward despite the daunting challenges before him. The low angle does compel one to contemplate the importance of the task ahead given the difficult economic terrain being encountered by ordinary Americans. This is not a time when America can feel warm and fuzzy. The camera frames this idea by suggesting enough distance to imply a serious attitude while recognizing the achievements made. In another lower angle shot from the floor of an auto plant, the camera selects a long shot of an assembly line worker. The

purpose of the low angle raises the worker's stature with the long shot driving home the broader theme of economic renaissance.

Camera Movement

In most of the still photos, movement is created with slow zooms, pans, tilts, and pull outs. This serves the purpose of balance, visual appeal, and rhythm. For example, a slow zoom-in is followed by a zoom-out and a tilt. This puts energy into the photo, making the picture come alive. An intimate emotion is established as opposed to the emotional dullness one might feel without the movement. The viewer is actively participating in the economic recovery. Furthermore, the timing of the zooms give the production a rhythmic pulse that makes the piece visually interesting. The overall theme of Obama persevering and succeeding in the face of challenges is clearly underscored by the energy created with the movement.

Special Effects

Fades and Dissolves

The slow dissolving from one still photo to a black background has a powerful effect in this ad that connotes a seriousness of purpose. Furthermore, the high contrast dissolves between photos and black is a type of visual punctuation lending the piece a type of rhythmic structure. The use of fades and dissolves is a powerful tool for establishing rhythm, timing, and balance. Rhythm, or timing, while difficult to define, is an essential device for projecting meaning. Each tool works on a more subconscious level to reassure the viewer that what is being seen and heard makes sense. Good rhythm pulls the audience in and engages them in much the same way a popular tune does. Use

of dissolves is a visual technique that introduces new information and keeps the storyline going. That is, while the photos change, the overall message is that of America winning.

Editing

Montage

Montage is a compilation of images that, when combined, express a broader narrative or story with emotional meaning. Montage is an effective vehicle for revealing a character or idea more sympathetically. Due to the ad's montage, it seems easier for the viewer to feel common cause with the construction workers who are hoisting a new home wall or the firefighters celebrating. There is satisfaction seeing individuals connected to each other in their efforts to seek a better life and montage helps to make that connection. Also, the montage speaks to a broader thematic message of Americans coming back from adversity. The compilation of successive photos being slowly revealed helps to solidify the central narrative of this ad which is, a variety of Americans are succeeding because of Obama's perseverance.

Pacing

The pace of "Challenges" is slow and deliberate. Each still photo is inserted and held for a significant amount of time when compared to most of the political ads analyzed in this paper. This intensifies emotion as the viewer is urged to contemplate each photo. In particular, the slow pacing of photos showing successful Americans working hard gives ample emotional space to contemplate a stronger America. When viewed more holistically, pacing helps to connect each photo subject and elevate them all with importance. These are people who engender respect for their success.

Summary

In the ad “Challenges,” still photos depict Obama as a serious and thoughtful problem solver. The succession of photos shows American’s succeeding because of Obama’s policies. The photos contributed to the overall message that the best option is to maintain the present course.

The montage, pacing, fades and dissolves and camera movement combine to portray Americans as success stories. None of these visual and aural elements acting alone would have the same impact. The sum is greater than the parts. Broadly speaking, when montage is combined with pacing, fades, dissolves, and camera movement the viewer sees the unfolding story with more empathy.

The priming function is present in this ad as well. The standards by which Obama should be judged can be seen in the photos of people who are employed and thriving. With the use of still photos showing successful Americans overcoming adversity, the viewer is encouraged to evaluate Obama as a successful president.

Mitt Romney, October 22, 2012, “Healed”

In this negative ad from the Romney campaign, Obama is portrayed with a critical judgment of his handling of foreign affairs. Late in the ad, Obama is “caught” on camera finding common ground with the Prime Minister of Russia Medvedev to evoke the feeling that a conspiracy of some sort is underway. The purpose of the ad is to accuse Obama of causing the unrest in the Middle East.

Special Effects

This ad is characteristic of an ad where the visual and aural changes happen abruptly resulting in a halting mental pattern of temporary confusion due to the deviation from the norm. When the physical picture of reality is altered, it contradicts accustomed views of normalcy. This visual and aural tactic is accomplished through the means of special effects. The ad uses sound and image distortions as a way to project meaning in a decidedly negative way.

Voice Distortion

In the opening scene, Obama is heard giving a speech in front of a large crowd. His voice is over-modulated, making his normally resonant vocal tones sound abrasive. Altering the voice will give an erroneous impression in an attack ad. As Jamieson (1992) noted, voice distortions in TV ads affect the subconscious and make the sensible and rational processing of information less likely. The effect of the grotesque vocal quality grabs the attention of the audience by focusing the viewer away from the safe and familiar picture of reality to one that is instinctively difficult to grasp. Dancyger (1997) pointed out that an over-modulated voice is ominous. Obama's opening speech captures that mood perfectly. This ad arouses a sense of fear which is reinforced by other special effects.

Picture Distortion

Obama's deformed voice is combined with a distorted picture of him in black and white. The screen is heavily pixilated which makes the ad more memorably negative. The ad creator uses over pixilated visuals to exacerbate the feeling of the unknown. The

unsettling picture of Obama is starkly incongruent with an unaltered picture of him. The warped presentation of reality evinced by the altered picture encourages the viewer to associate negative qualities to Obama. Something akin to the antithesis of reassuring normalcy is suggested with this approach.

Black and White Color

Color is also incorporated in the ad to illicit a negative reaction. To ensure the message of fear is incontestable, Obama is always cast in black and white. As Brader (2006) noted, bright colors versus the absence of color conveys character qualities. In the case of black and white pictures, the viewer may feel a heightened sense of fear and danger.

The use of black and white for Obama has a priming effect on voters in that he is negatively evaluated on the basis of his darker pigmentation. Researchers have noted that voters tend to associate negative qualities with darker pigmentation (Messing, Plaut, & Jabon, 2010). In “Healed,” the audience sees a picture that is noticeably altered in terms of color and pigmentation to enhance his blackness and thereby triggering fear in the audience. Previous researchers have found when people are shown pictures of darker-skinned blacks, fear activation increases (Maddox & Gray, 2002). The black images in “Healed” are manipulated to exploit negative stereotypes. The distorted black and white picture of Obama portrays him as the seductive villain who is not what he says he is. When the subtext of Obama’s race is added to the mix, the stereotype of an angry, dangerous, and perhaps violent man comes to mind. The combined effect of color, sound alteration and visual distortion implies a significant amount of distrust and suspicion. “Healed” is a classic example of a spot using color to summon fear.

Normal Color

A normalized view of reality sharply contrasts with the discordant black and white images to imbue meaning. The distorted black and white Obama contrasted with credible news sources in a well lit environment is jolting to the eye and ear. Mid-point in “Healed,” the viewer sees and hears from familiar journalistic faces intoning about chaotic world events. Different news men quickly appear to comment on the danger. Their faces are separated by “snow,” which is a commonly used special effect. The snow, as a metaphor for chaos, is given credibility with the sober assessments offered by the journalists. With the use of normal versus altered coloration, the viewer is cued to find solidarity with the newsmen and agree with their threat assessments. Conversely, the use of black for Obama is a way to depict him as an outsider. Because of his odd appearance, Obama cannot be trusted to confront the dangerous world.

Sound Effects

Interspersed during the brief encounters with journalists, the viewer sees wobbly and grainy pictures of protesters running, smoke spewing, and mobs yelling. The pictures are accompanied by sound effects, such as chaotic street noises and sirens, to reinforce the notion of a dangerous world. Sound effects are an effective way to introduce an idea in ways that bypass intellectual scrutiny. Here, the sound effects introduce the idea of chaos to the viewer. Specifically, the viewer intensely feels the danger from Obama.

As Price's (2011) research has shown, sound effects create a type of musical rhythm and establish mood. With vocal distortions this ad takes on a distinct vocal rhythm that is brought out by sounds of cheering crowds as a way to emphasize certain words. With normal voicing, the effect of rhythm would be less pronounced. The eerie, hypnotic, and rhythmic-like chanting of Obama's voice enhanced by the distorted sound conjures a primal, tribal feel of pulsating intensity. When combined with the applause, the delivery hints at some sort of demagogic figure proclaiming that under his leadership the "oceans will cease to rise and the planet will be healed."

Summary

In the ad "Healed" the distorted pictures, voice, and sound effects conveyed the feeling of impending doom under an Obama presidency. The overall meaning of the ad is to portray Obama as a bizarre outsider who is responsible for the chaos in the Middle East.

In combination, voice, picture, lighting, and color were distorted to elicit anxiety about the future of America. The absence of normalcy instigates feelings of insecurity which in turn encourage a negative view of the ad target as the cause of the insecurity. There is also at work in the combination of these dimensions a sense of the inevitability of doom. In combination, special effects build suspense, exaggerate consequences, and create momentum. The viewer is influenced to see the ad target as the cause of the calamity, to reject the current course of action, and to make things right once again at the voting booth.

Framing theory helps to identify meaning much more clearly. In "Healed," the problem of a Barack Obama presidency is clearly delineated with dark lighting, altered

sound, picture distortion and stark color variation. The mixing together of sound bites from credible journalist points out that, under his watch, Obama has caused the disarray. Obama is a decidedly suspicious figure and the only possible treatment recommendation is his defeat at the voting booth. Additionally, the visual and aural techniques frame Obama's race in such a way as to call up negative associations with dark skinned individuals. Because of negative racial stereotyping, viewers are primed to see Obama as a threat. His race becomes the standard of evaluation.

The overall negative effect of this spot is much more exaggerated than would be the case with normal pictures and sound. In this case, the sound, visuals and colors are used incongruently to jolt the listeners from complacency and warn them there is a threat on the horizon.

Barack Obama, September 27, 2012, "My Job"

The "My Job" spot seeks to turn Romney's words against him. The ad takes verbatim comments Romney made to a group of Florida donors in which he says the 47% of Americans who are dependent on government and who do not take responsibility for their lives. The broad claim of "My Job" is that about half the country consists of freeloaders and moochers who would never vote for Romney. More specifically, the ad reinforces liberal assumptions that Romney is a privileged person completely out of touch with "real" Americans.

Special Effects

Color

Against a deep black backdrop, the graphics selectively reveal Romney's words. Black is a color that has serious implications and often implies questionable character qualities. In addition, the black graphics signal fear and anger which act to incite in the audience's deep misgivings about Romney. In contrast, people who allegedly represent the 47% in normal coloration are seen. They are ordinary folks who could not possibly be those people Romney indicted as freeloaders.

Graphics

The graphics are faded in and out in large bold face as Romney speaks the words. However, there is one graphic that remains throughout which says, "47 percent of Americans," while other graphics containing selected Romney quotes are slowly revealed. This is a good example of how graphics dramatize alarming statistics, or alarming opinions, in this case. Graphics visually reinforce what is being said. When graphics are combined with the words spoken by Romney, the audience's sense of hearing and sight is stimulated, making the message more memorable. Written words seen on a screen appear to be more objective since the viewer is reading the material. Conversely, pictures and sound are less definitive, more ephemeral and seem less credible. Since graphics appear more objective, they impart a feeling of certitude regarding the claim that Romney is uncaring.

Summary

In this spot, slowly revealed graphics over Romney's own spoken words combine to put the words in the context of secretly held convictions that reveal the real Romney. There is a priming effect in this ad. Using Romney's own words, shown against a black background with boldly revealed graphics, encourages a more critical analysis by the viewer. The combination of all the elements of this ad sets forth the criteria by which Romney is to be harshly judged. The overall meaning of "My Job" is to make the case that Romney is a heartless and uncaring elitist.

Mitt Romney, September 18, 2012, "Prairie Fire"

"Prairie Fire" adroitly exploits special effects to accuse Obama of being responsible for America's growing debt. Fire is the central metaphor invoked to convince the viewer that the debt Obama has accumulated is going to destroy America. This ad portrays Obama as an irresponsible President unwilling to curtail spending even if it means utter devastation.

Special Effects

Color

"Prairie Fire" has a sense of urgency to it. In the ad's opening moments, a screen full of smoke and haze emerges from a black background. Behind the bucolic scenes of farms, neighborhoods and businesses, the fire seems to be growing. Perhaps the most compelling visual to convey the mood is the overall red color which remains throughout the entirety of the ad. The color may be an attempt to activate cultural beliefs of fear associated with red. For example, red is the color of blood, fire and hell. As Brader

(2006) has noted in previous research, the color red may operate on a subconscious level to generate certain types of emotion such as fear and anxiety. The pervasive use of red emboldens the viewer to attach anxiety to the nation's debt by encouraging the view that the debt will destroy the country.

Superimposition

The dark reddish tint is superimposed behind a series of shots of farms, neighborhoods and businesses. The superimposition is a special effect that heightens awareness and brings together on the screen two apparently disparate ideas: a peaceful home life and a menacing fire of debt ready to destroy homes. There are two antipodal concepts exploited on the screen at the same time. One concept is the idea of American exceptionalism represented by scenes of pastoral landscapes and thriving homes. In the top half of the screen on the horizon, the opposite concept is the extinction of everything Americans hold dear. The viewer is not allowed to see any complexity outside of the simplistic view of peace and destruction superimposed on one another. The viewer is encouraged, therefore, to conclude that the debt Obama has caused is destroying the best of America.

Lighting

The lighting in "Prairie Fire" also reinforces the notion of an exceptional America and the types of threats that America faces. The lighting functions as a contrast between good and evil. In the opening few seconds the viewer sees a pastoral archetype of what is good about America represented by a brightly lit farm house. There is a sense of a bright future for America and a respect for traditions that go to the core of the American

experience. The sunlit farms and homes are metaphors for family, tradition, and wholesomeness. This portrayal provides the necessary context for the introduction of the threat to America coming from the massive debt. With the introduction of the darker lighting and the storms on the horizon, there is a severe contrast between contentment and discontent. The threat to a way of life is there for all to see.

Music

Dissonance

Dancyger (1997) concluded that sound is more believable than visuals, and the same can be said for the music in “Prairie Fire.” Musical dissonance abounds to make the apocalyptic pile of debt much more threatening. The music is essentially noise with no apparent goal beyond making the listener uncomfortable. Notes refuse to be resolved into happy chords and raise the tension level. Listeners instinctively want the sound to make sense but that satisfaction never comes. The introduction of sharp musical-like sounds maintained throughout the ad is a way to emphasize feelings as opposed to facts.

The purpose of the electronically driven music may be threefold. First, it serves to foreshadow disaster. Second, the screeching music gives the production an artificial trait making the subject of debt even more ominous. Third, the music supports the dramatic core of the piece which is economic Armageddon. Furthermore, the music punctuates the piece giving it a type of erratic rhythmic structure causing the viewer to pay more attention to the impending calamity. The volume is faded in and out to enhance the distress. All of these elements of music combine to help frame the overall argument by signaling to the viewer what they are to pay attention to and how to feel about it.

Dissonance, volume alteration, and electronically driven music make the threat from debt much more vivid.

Summary

In the ad “Prairie Fire” there was a menacing fire ready to consume America. Obama is portrayed as a careless leader whose spending policies are causing the destruction of America.

“Prairie Fire” is the apotheosis of how an ad is framed to induce a particular meaning. In “Prairie Fire,” the audience sees a problem, the cause of it, the evaluation and the remedy. Visual and aural techniques, such as the music, color, lighting, and superimposition, work in combination to paint Obama as a big spending liberal. When all four of Entman’s (1993) framing criteria are present, the message is more convincing than if one or more elements were missing. The message was delivered in 30 seconds and left no doubt, beyond a person’s independent effort to employ some sort of counter frame, as to how the audience is supposed to think about this issue.

Distorted color, music, lighting, and superimposition combine to more clearly define the contrast between good and evil. The ad contributed to the overall message that, unless the viewer wants America to be destroyed with debt, they must elect Romney.

Mitt Romney, November 2, 2012, “More than a Number”

“More than a Number” is a spot that tells the story of ordinary Americans facing various economic crises, such as losing businesses and not being able to find jobs. The meaning of the ad is to blame Obama for economic calamity.

Special Effects

Slow Motion

In the opening picture the face of a woman in her restaurant is faded in. She turns her head toward the camera in a slow motion movement. All of the subjects, including this woman, have a look of resigned dignity. In spite of their gallant efforts to overcome adversity, they have been stymied by Obama's policies. The slow motion urges the viewer to contemplate the situations facing these subjects and to understand the gravity of the problem. It is also a way to convey a longer time frame which makes the sufferings of these people seem endless. The slow motion also enhances their humanity making them more believable. When the slow motion is combined with facial expressions of valiant resignation, the overall effect is to create empathy for these perceived victims of Obama.

Color

The underlying narrative of victimization is enhanced with stark black and white photos. In many different ads, black and white are used to suggest fear, but in this particular ad, the message is less about fear and more about frustration. The high contrast images emphasize the starkness of financial status and bring into clearer focus the faces of pain. This technique is a way for the ad creator to highlight facial expressions where feeling is conveyed. The contrast in the first photo of a woman who had to close her restaurant after 82 years forces the viewer to look at her face which reveals a slight smile against a dark background. In the same manner, the third picture is of a smiling woman with her arms around her child seemingly consoling him. The high contrast between

black and white delivers an unequivocal message that the viewer should pay attention to the painful predicaments and to assign blame to Obama.

Dissolves

Each of the slow motion pictures are separated with slow dissolves to black. The slow dissolves suggest inevitability to the awful consequences being suffered by these people under Obama. Their victimization is willful and deliberate, much like the pacing of the dissolves. The dissolves also seek to link the victims into a single narrative of economic upheaval.

Editing

Montage

Montage helps to portray, in a more holistic fashion, the underlying narrative that human beings are at the center of this disaster and their fate is being decided by malevolent external forces. The sequence of slow motion video separated with dissolves in high contrast is a montage of images supporting a unifying theme. Moreover, when looking at the pictures together, they effectively establish tone and mood in ways that a single and disconnected picture would not. Through montage, the story of struggle and empathy for the subjects is told more vividly. In this ad, montage is a way of taking power out of the hands of people by turning them into victims of external forces over which they have no control.

Summary

In this spot, viewers see a series of pictures of ordinary Americans suffering under a bad economy. Obama is portrayed as the man who is willfully perpetrating misery on these helpless people. This ad portrays Obama as an uncaring and ineffective leader.

When slow motion is combined with montage, dissolves, and camera movement, it has the effect of making the suffering seem endless. This accomplishes three goals: first, to enhance victimization; second, to create empathy for the subjects; and third, to encourage the viewer to ponder the pain more deeply. Any one of these elements seen alone would not have the same impact as they do when viewed together.

Barack Obama, September 12, 2012 “Won’t Say”

In this ad Romney’s tax plan is the primary subject matter. The ad accuses Romney of being a self-interested elitist who is hiding the truth behind his tax plan.

Editing

Voice Track/Picture Incongruency

In “Won’t Say,” there is an example of using a voice track to create an alternative meaning than one suggested by the images alone. Early in this ad, the viewer sees a very grim looking Mitt Romney while an announcer claims that he “won’t say what’s in his taxes.” The graphic shows an envelope filled with tax forms stamped with the word “confidential.” The announcer attempts to connect his words with Romney’s odd expression. However, when looking at the photos alone the viewer would not necessarily draw the same conclusion as the announcer does.

In the next frame, the narrator says Romney also will not tell the viewer what he will do with their taxes. The visual imagery shows the candidate walking away in slow motion from a podium smiling broadly. The self-confident Romney is looking downward which suggests dismissive condescension. The message seems to inquire whether Romney could be smiling at the pain he is going to cause Americans. The next shot shows Romney in a still photo, the same smile frozen now, as he disembarks from a jet plane. In the final sequence, as the announcer says, “How much would you pay...? Romney just won’t say!” The viewer sees a medium still photo of Romney with a pursed lip and no teeth half smile conveying a sense of unease and awkwardness.

In the context of presidential advertising, the absence of voice/picture congruency causes a distortion of reality which invites the audience to feel uncomfortable. The discordant imagery in this particular ad can be seen as a countervailing frame to produce aversion and/or disdain for target of the ad. Simply stated, the picture, sound, and lighting insertions shock the viewer into believing the target of the ad is out of place. The grimaced expression, a tense pursed lip smile, and the smiling Romney are all pictures taken out of context and given a new meaning with the voice track. While the pictures showing a discomfited Romney may be congruent with the bleak message about the impact of his tax plan, it is not necessarily representative of how *he* feels about his plan. Therefore, it is sharply incongruent in terms of the editor’s ability to take an emotion out of context and apply it to an unrelated idea.

Vocal Delivery Incongruency

In “Won’t Say,” the photos and video of Romney depict a man whose image is sharply discordant with the message being intoned by an announcer’s sarcastic delivery.

The vocal delivery of the script adds to the “false” irony conveyed in the production. A voice-over narration contains non-verbal elements, such as pitch, rate, range, pausing and intonation. The sarcasm is achieved primarily by manipulating these vocal elements. For example, ending a phrase with an upward pitch inflection connotes disbelief and irony. Elongating vowels can imply sarcasm while shortening a word at the end of a sentence could imply self-assuredness.

It appears sound and visual incongruency throughout “Won’t Say,” raises the character issue of deception. When viewers hear the mocking predictions of inevitable doom from the announcer over Romney’s tax plan, the viewer sees him walking away from the disaster in a smiling manner. The ad creator is suggesting with vocal inflection there is duplicity in what Romney says and does. In the last still photo, the no teeth half smile concludes the production with an air of absurdity while the announcer claims deception. The incongruity reaches its peak moment at the end of the piece where the viewer is left with no doubt that Romney’s ideas are bizarre at best.

Summary

In “Won’t Say” there is a series of unflattering photographs and video of Romney while the announcer creates an alternative reality of taking out of context photos and assigning a new meaning to them. The incongruency of voice track, vocal delivery, and picture suggests Romney knows his own tax plan would be disastrous.

Mitt Romney, October 5, 2012, “Facts are Clear”

In this 30 second ad, graphics are utilized to describe the current debt situation under Obama compared with previous administrations. The meaning of this ad is to say that Obama is a profligate spender who is sending the country into economic oblivion.

Editing

Voice/Picture Incongruency

The smiling photo of Obama suddenly recedes as the announcer says, “We can’t afford another four years.” This ad takes a putative Obama asset and turns it against him. His smiling face is now the face of horrific spending and the debt crisis. The announcer’s pessimistic delivery sharply contrasts with the pictures of Obama and attach a new meaning to the photos. The voice evinces the image of a heartless politician who blissfully, even joyfully, ignores the suffering he is causing through his foolish spending.

Graphics

In “Facts are Clear,” the viewer sees grainy black and white photos of Obama looking downward with a smirk on his face. The graphics of large font and bold face statements excoriate Obama for the debt amassed under his presidency. These graphics quickly move about the screen leaving little time to ponder the statements. In one sequence, an unflattering photo of Obama dances across the screen to make room for the graphics. In the photo, Obama does not seem to care about the problems he has created. At one point, his face is compressed against the side of the screen as the viewer sees graphics revealing bleak economic statistics. Knowing that the quick insertion of graphics

and pictures heightens emotional intensity, the ad creator is able to provoke feelings of urgency and despair. The frequent edits where graphics and photos come and go quickly serve to inhibit viewer scrutiny. The audience has little opportunity to fully take in the information.

At about the 12 second mark, the audience sees a framed color photo of Obama placed into the middle of the screen which is followed in quick succession with still photos of every previous American president in history. The gravity of the situation is heightened when the viewer sees pictures of all the other presidents as faces in a deck of cards being shuffled. The narrator explains how the debt under Obama is greater than all other presidents combined. This point is strongly underscored with a large graphic that says “DEBT” with numbers rapidly increasing in amounts representing the trillions of dollars in national debt. By isolating a still color photo, the ad creator is able to isolate blame for the debt on one individual. An unflattering comparison is implied. This editing strategy magnifies and contextualizes the debt drama.

Movement

The picture moves from the past presidents to a tight shot of a dollar bill that has been torn in half. As the bill moves to screen left, space is created for the words and the revealing that 30 cents on the dollar is being borrowed. Again, the movement achieved with the graphics serves to prevent the viewer from concluding anything other than Obama has personally spent this borrowed money. Another quick insert of a graphic displays the flag of China. The flag is first seen in black and white and then suddenly turns to red while the announcer says much of the borrowed money comes from China. The fast paced movement reinforces the sense of urgency and helps to cement the view

that Obama is not only a profligate spender, but is in a big rush to spend the money. Furthermore, the photo of a gleeful Obama is quickly moved to the left side of the screen. This artificial compression denies Obama the necessary “looking space” to see reality and adds to the feeling that Obama is not only apathetic about the debt but does not see clearly what is obvious to Americans.

In the last sequence, the grainy photo of Obama reappears smiling and waving. His picture moves across the screen quickly to make way for more graphic indictments. A primary goal of the ad which is to reduce complexity down to a simplistic cause, Obama, is accomplished through movement. The Obama dance adds to the message that he has a careless attitude about debt. The fast movement also develops a negative energy dynamic which insinuates that the monster debt will consume us all if Obama’s spending policies are not stopped. Knowing that up tempo pacing raises negative expectations (Kaid, Nimmo, & Sanders, 1986), the viewer of this particular ad is encouraged to arrive at a damning conclusion. The fast paced graphics surrounded by dancing photos of a smiling Obama and proclaiming gloom are ironic.

Summary

In this spot, graphics and voice/picture incongruency portray Obama as a hapless caretaker of the country’s wealth. The fast paced nature of the changing information helps to make the case that Obama’s actions will lead to an inevitable conclusion while he blissfully ignores the consequences of his spending.

Quickly revealed moving graphics combined with voice track incongruency and color manipulation establish the overall emotional tone of impending doom. The message of communist influence over the financial well being of America is clearly

inferred with a fractured dollar bill giving way to a full screen red flag of China. The pacing in this spot complements the dancing graphics by lending urgency to the message.

Barack Obama, October 9, 2012 “C’mon Man”

This ad brings up the topic of education in the context of how the two candidates will address the issue. The ad, through the use of graphics and music, portrays Romney as a wealthy patrician preparing to undercut education in America while at the time enjoying the benefits of wealth made possible by his Ivy League education. It also reinforces the notion that Obama is a typical American.

Graphics

This ad is an ideal example of an ad that uses an overwhelming amount of information presented quickly. It is accomplished with constantly moving and changing graphics. In the opening sequence, there are splashes of the colors green and purple moving across the screen behind a photo of Romney with large font statements underscoring the announcer’s words. The splashing color adds to the casual and sarcastic nature of the spot. The splashes of color also distract the viewer as important claims are being made perhaps to discourage more thoughtful scrutiny. It is not unlike a product advertisement in which many amazing claims are being made to enhance urgency, persuasion, and to avoid serious discussion.

At about the nine second mark, there are crudely made waves at the bottom of the screen moving while a luxury yacht fills the rest of the screen. The waves juxtaposed with the yacht underscores the announcer’s rhetorical question, “How does giving these guys an extra \$250,000 tax break help these guys?” Then, as the yacht quickly moves

screen right, there is a new photo of a couple holding the hand of a child while the screen again flashes with color. The crude waves and odd splashes of color combine to suggest that the viewer cannot take Romney seriously. The comical depiction of waves adds to the overall tone of ironic exasperation. Romney's loyalty seems to be associated with wealth and tax breaks while the state of American education suffers.

Music

In "C'mon Man" music is an essential device for conveying meaning. Overall, this tune captures attention and engages the listener by invoking a commonly heard musical genre.

In the opening moments, a strong but simple rock beat is established. The rock beat represents a familiar pattern found in the popular culture. Music has the ability to produce feelings of commonality and familiarity (Diamond & Bates, 1988), and this ad exploits this notion with the selected beats. This is due to the fact that the rock idiom is so pervasive in American culture and does not require the listener to over think the music. Younger voters may be more inclined to identify with the ad in its familiar invocation of rock themes.

The rhythmic structure, which is a simple three note progression, is repeated incessantly and conjures up a primal feel. This particular ad is emblematic of ads where tension is stated with monotonous repetition while the viewer hears a litany of problems associated with Romney's tax and education plans. The tension seeks to raise expectations for change that will be met with the more lyrical music that comes later.

This ad uses simple musical phrasing to make a statement about Romney's policies on education and taxation. The uncomplicated music suggests to the listener that

Romney does not deserve serious attention. The viewer is invited to disregard any intelligent analysis of Romney's positions. Similarly, the familiar rock beat is persistent and has no pauses where thoughtful analysis might occur. As Hansen & Benoit (2002) have noted, music, in general, transcends rational scrutiny and awakens a primal reaction. In the case of this ad, the reaction may be to dismiss the substantive merits of Romney's plans. This is achieved with the repeating three note pattern which provokes boredom due to its persistent monotony. Romney's plan is depicted as similarly boring and undeserving of serious contemplation.

Knowing that music sets the stage for a new idea (Timmerman, et al., 2008), the music in this ad introduces a new dramatic theme when Obama enters the picture. The tension created with the incessant beat and rhythm is resolved into longer, more lyrical melodic phrasing using a guitar as the primary instrument. The use of a guitar in this ad has significance. The guitar, by being a casual instrument, could suggest to the listener not to take Romney's ideas too seriously. The lack of seriousness contrasts sharply with Romney's impeccable educational pedigree that the music seems to mock. The music becomes a countervailing storyline in which Romney's assets are musically cast as an example of elitist naiveté and snobbery. The popular sound of the guitar at the mention of Obama also encourages younger voters to associate him with youth and vitality.

Vocal Delivery

The young narrator's voice establishes familiarity with his generation. The delivery is accomplished with a conversational tone, as opposed a more stereotypical announcer, and is highly conversational and informal. The vocal tones make what is being revealed in the ad ironic because the voice is less driven. As previous research has

indicated, music and vocal congruency is a way to express solidarity (Houston & Haddock, 2007). Congruency is established between the voice and the music. There is a parallel between the vocal delivery and the music in terms of similar pitch, rate, volume, pauses, and attitude which helps to reinforce the harsh judgment surrounding Romney's education plans. To accomplish this, the narrator sarcastically employs a higher pitch range. The phrase "C'mon man," which is the ad's title, is a commonly used slang phrase. When slang is delivered vocally with a high inflection at the end of the sentence, viewers are filled with ironic exasperation and impatience at the idea that Romney just does not understand.

Summary

In this ad, the large font and colored graphics with splashes of color moving quickly across the screen contributed to the portrayal of a self-interested rich guy who does not care about the education needs of average people.

The announcer's voice in combination with the music added a sense of sarcastic dismissiveness toward Romney's education plans. Vocally, musically, graphically and with visual symmetry, the picture of Romney is complete. It repeatedly builds the case that Romney is out of touch with the common man.

Mitt Romney, November 1st, 2012, "Secretary of Business"

This ad is comprised of still photos, music and dissolves with the aim to accuse Obama of being anti-business. The ad depicts Obama as an incompetent president who is unable to make good business decisions.

Camera

Zooms

Over the narrator's pessimistic tone, the viewer sees darkened still photos symbolic of economic decay. Within each photo the camera zooms closer and then pulls out to a wider shot while gloomy notes continue.

Special Effects

Dissolves

Each photo is separated by a slow dissolve to black. The dissolves between photos and the slow zooms allow the viewer to mull over the consequences of Obama's lack of business acumen. The pain is long lasting, significant, and deliberately inflicted.

Music

The music in "Secretary of Business" is introduced with a recurring piano motif. The piano's pervasive and long association with western music tradition primes the viewer to feel something when the piano is played. That is, the history and familiarity of the piano establishes an emotional tone of credibility. The percussive nature of the piano strikes a strong beat which serves to emphasize the narrator's words and reinforce the crucial points.

Dissonance

The ad creator seems to rely on the piano's somber minor chord progression expressed in a monotonous three note pattern. It helps to lay the emotional groundwork for the piece as a whole. The viewer is invited to assess a terrible economic situation and

to assign blame for it with the playing of three alarming notes in succession. Obama's policies are to blame for unemployment, more welfare, and more food stamps.

The introductory piano motif serves two purposes. First, it invites the listener to stay tuned because of its minor chord quality. Second, the dissonance has a menacing quality in that the suffering of Americans seems to be willfully perpetrated by Obama. Harmonically speaking, the musical indictment is achieved with a minor chord that refuses to be released into a major chord which is associated with happiness (Piston, 1962). Tension mounts as the composer refuses to give in to what the audience wants, which is resolution. The satisfaction of a resolution will never come as long as Obama is president. Adding to the somber tone is the playing from a lower note register on the piano which is traditionally reserved for very grave circumstances.

The music complements the depressing photos which also seem to provide evidence of the pain Obama has caused. There is a sign hung on a door saying, "Closed." The dismal chord is struck at the precise moment the sign is seen. Past researchers have noted that music serves to increase the effect of pictures (Graber, 2009). In "Secretary of Business," the ad creator produces a synergy between the photos and the music which lead the audience to a very negative appraisal of Obama when combined.

Consonance

There is some foreshadowing with the music in "Secretary of Business." A new major chord is temporarily introduced with a strong chordal downbeat when the narrator asks, "Why don't we have a president who actually understands business?" The major chord is louder and happier and puts the viewer in a more hopeful mood. New instrumentation is heard as a contrast to the piano. For a brief moment, the tension is

alleviated and the listener can be assured something better is ahead. However, the somber piano motif is reintroduced and the viewer must endure more bad news before the tension is alleviated.

The triumphant entrance of Romney at the 20 second point dramatically changes the meaning of this ad. The slow still photo montage is now replaced with Romney taking in the adoration of his fans under a bright white light. The upbeat music complements the hand held camera which captures Romney from various angles. This is a spontaneous, impulsive, and unplanned Romney greeting his devotees to sounds of victorious violin themes. The theme has a marching quality with the use of strings in a more percussive sense as opposed to a long lyrical progression. It is easy to picture the jubilant hero throwing himself before his followers. The regal musical intonations contribute to a view of Romney that is harmonious and happy. The listener understands this instinctively because music reaches him/her on a more emotional level. Words alone could not match the emotional tone presented in this production.

Vocal Delivery

Vocal congruency helps to sell this production. The voice-over quality from the beginning is at a slower, more deliberate rate. The voice is speaking in a lower pitch range similar to the lower piano register. He uses more pauses to allow the viewer to ponder more critically what is being shown. This effect is complemented by the slow dissolves to black separating the visuals. When Romney enters the picture, the voice is higher, faster, and emphatic. This vocal/visual/musical congruency conveys a message of unanimity.

Summary

In this ad, music was combined with slow zooms and dissolves of still photos to create an emotional shorthand for suffering and blame. These techniques contributed to the portrayal of Obama as an incompetent business leader.

In combination, the vocal tone and bleak music can be seen through the lens of framing theory. For example, the problem for the country has to be identified and this is accomplished by mixing a gloomy initial musical motif with a photo of Obama grimacing. Continuing the framing analogy, the viewer sees that Obama is directly responsible for all the suffering and that will not change unless a remedy is proposed. The evaluation portion, which of course is harsh in blaming Obama, is also achieved with music through the use of the minor key. The remedy is heard in the form of tonal resolution as Romney is introduced midway through the ad. The Romney appearance is satisfying because the minor chord tension and dissonance evaporates giving the listener the sense that a solution to all of the problems is present with Romney.

Barack Obama, October 27, 2012 “30 Seconds to Name all of MR Mass Taxes and Fees”

This ad attempts to use Romney’s record as Governor of Massachusetts to make the claim that he raised taxes. The ad portrays Romney as a hypocrite.

Special Effects

Sound Effects

The graphics are accompanied by sound effects. Each time there is a new fee, the sound of a typewriter key loudly landing on its target is heard. There are also sounds of

coils bouncing, missiles going off, a cow mooing, and a siren in the background. The sounds roughly correspond to the fee being increased. For example, when fees on milk are shown going up, the sound of a cow mooing is heard. Sound reinforces the words but affects the listener more instinctively. While the words are seen intellectually, there is an emotional reaction to the sound. This reaction occurs, in part, because the sound of a cow cues the viewer to picture a cow making the effect of the fees much more memorable in addition to adding to the effect of absurdity.

Graphics

Against a white background the ad opens with large font black words saying “As Governor of Massachusetts, Mitt Romney claims he didn’t raise taxes.” Then the screen reads, “Can we name all the taxes in 30 seconds?” Following the question are detailed sentences describing the fees Romney raised. The graphics enter from the left, right, below and above. As the ad continues, the pace of their movement quickens to the point where it is impossible to read each fee. The extreme movement and excessive detail lend a sense that there is obvious evidence so the viewer does not need to stop and ponder what is presented. Furthermore, the torrent of information is presented so fast the viewer is quickly overwhelmed which has the effect of discouraging any kind of thoughtful reflection. The emphasis goes from a substantive discussion about each fee to a comical production where an overall mood of absurdity is established.

Music

The high energy tune used in this ad was written by 19th century composer Jacques Offenbach and is associated with the can-can, a French music hall dance. Often, the production involves a chorus line of female dancers kicking up their legs and lifting their skirts. The music conveys a bawdy, circus like atmosphere. The melody is a comic archetype that recalls the chaotic nature of life. In this ad, the tune clearly casts Romney as a clown-like figure. The music seeks to place Governor Romney's support of higher fees in Massachusetts as something to ridicule. By using a tune that invokes pandemonium, the ad creator is setting the stage for more absurdity to be presented.

The downward progression of notes suggests a feeling of losing control. This note pattern is followed by the introduction of a new chord with more descending notes. This falling preamble sets the emotional stage for the interpretation of Romney's policies in Massachusetts. The ad uses Romney's voice to explain that he cut taxes 19 times which establishes the context for the parody. There are more falling notes as Senator John McCain excoriates Romney for his fees. The audience is in a musical holding pattern in which the words of Romney and his primary opponent provide the backdrop for what is still to come.

At the 17 second mark the preamble ends and the march into silliness begins. The pace quickens by increasing the tempo. Graphics are added asking the viewer questions which will be answered with a fast driving tempo accompanied by graphics. Now, the listener hears the familiar melody with its highly rhythmic quality which is exploited to emphasize the absurdity of the fees. For example, under the phrase "In 30 seconds," each word is set apart with a strong piano downbeat and bouncing sound effects. With the

invocation of such a famous melody with stereotypical connotations, the debate is not a serious one. The music sets the mood of taunting sarcasm and builds expectation with a fast tempo and falling notes. There is the sense of an ineluctable punch line coming.

The production is playful on the surface, but under the surface, a cultural genre has been evoked that carries more weight when seen holistically (Richardson, 2000). In American culture, music can convey any number of cultural genres from a horror movie, and a newscast, to a soap opera. Music, along with other tools to project meaning, tells a much bigger story than any of the individual parts of the ad. In “30 Seconds to Name all of MR Mass Taxes and Fees,” the slapstick comedic genre is advanced very effectively with the music. No narrator is necessary. The audience is led musically to the inexorable conclusion that Romney can only be understood in the context of farce. Clearly, Romney is the brunt of the joke. At the end of the ad, the punch line is revealed and the question is answered with a large black graphic that says, “NOPE, we only named half.”

Summary

In this ad, only words and music are used to portray Romney as a patent hypocrite who cannot be trusted on taxes. Together, the chaotic music overwhelming amounts of words scrolled from all directions conveys the mood of absurdity.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The meaning of an ad is constructed through the verbal content of the ad in addition to audio and video elements. The aural and visual dimensions employed in TV ads are crucial pieces of the meaning construction process. When these dimensions are combined together by a talented director, the meaning of an ad is greatly amplified. Throughout this study, I have found that dimensions are routinely manipulated to construct a particular understanding about a candidate and issues. In order to take full advantage of the tools of distortion, ad creators develop evocative production strategies to specifically combine the techniques to suggest an overall meaning about the candidate or an issue.

Special effects are often combined to drive home an ad's central narrative. The effects seem to emotionally connect the viewer to the ad's message leaving little room for intelligent reflection. When reality is distorted through multiple visual and aural channels, viewers are less likely to process information rationally. Sounds, pictures and ideas are easily distorted to create a synergistic dynamic that overwhelms human perception and lessens the chance for intelligent discourse.

The combination of special effects with other dimensions, such as camera, editing, graphics, and music, creates an emotional tone in much the same way a familiar song evokes a feeling. In the case of ads such as "Prairie Fire," and "Healed," the emotional tone was fear. Voice, picture, lighting, and color were distorted to elicit anxiety about the future of America. The absence of normalcy instigates feelings of

insecurity which, in turn, encourages a negative view of the ad target as the cause of the insecurity. There is also the sense of the inevitability of doom with the combination of these dimensions. Special effects build suspense, exaggerate consequences, and create momentum. The viewer is influenced to see the ad target as the cause of the calamity, to reject the current course of action, and to make things right once again at the voting booth. The combination of effects reduces complexity and suggests the viewer has only one option.

The emotional tone of fear created by special effects operates on a more visceral level, and thereby circumvents the viewer's ability for reasonable contemplation. For example, in "Prairie Fire," the red fire and smoke superimposed on the horizon creates a sense of panic around the consequences of the nation's debt which is the destruction of the American lifestyle. Reddish tints of fire and smoke are associated with blood, the devil, and fear. Special effects work together to establish the primary emotional tone of fear reducing the intellectual argument to secondary significance.

Music is the most malleable of all the dimensions due to the various combinations of notes and instruments utilized to construct meaning. One common construction is the use of minor chords. In one ad, the somber repetition of a three note minor progression introduced the theme of despair. Sad tonal progression in ads distorts emotional reality because of the refusal of the music to be peacefully resolved. This failure to satisfy expectations creates a mood of impending doom. In another scenario, music is triumphantly expressed in major chords played with brass instruments to connote a positive state of mind. An ad *without* music can come across as missing something important.

Music is most powerful when used in conjunction with other dimensions, such as graphics, pacing, montage and camera. When high tempo music combines with quickly moving graphics, the audience gets a very clear message without a need for an announcer. This was the case in the ad, “Can you Name.” In this ad, Offenbach’s famous “Can-Can” composition was used to create the emotional tone of ridicule. This tone occurs while the screen filled with hundreds of “fees” no human being could read let alone contemplate. Music and graphics together indicted, convicted, and sentenced Romney’s record to a level of sarcasm that could not be accomplished with narration. Moreover, high energy music and quickly moving graphics provide a pacing that contributes to the overall impact of the ad which is not about thoughtful discourse but about mocking someone’s record. I found the use of massive amounts of moving information accompanied by musical inanity is very common in TV ads because the viewer is cued to feel something and is less inclined to rationally react through cognitive intervention. Music is so pervasive because it attaches emotion to the ad target that is difficult to consciously deconstruct. Additionally, when music is combined with other dimensions, it is the ultimate device for complementing, emphasizing, and reinforcing ideas about candidates.

Montage, pacing, lighting, dissolves, and slow motion are frequently combined to elicit a particular feeling about candidates. Slow pacing combined with a compilation of similar images brought out with high contrast lighting act together to tell a story. Story telling predates the written word and is a practice seen across most cultures. A good story has a beginning, middle and end, and it often includes a deeper lesson. This was the case in many of the ads where montage, pacing, lighting, camera movement and slow

motion were combined. In more than one ad, the high contrast black and white photos deemphasize environment by using darker coloration for the background while the brighter colors in the foreground help the viewer focus on the facial expressions where emotion is expressed. In negative ads, such as Romney's "More than a Number," when slow motion is added to the mix it prolongs suffering and turns the subjects into victims. In positive ads, montage, pacing, and lighting can also be used to tell a positive story as was the case in Obama's ad, "Challenges," where, instead of seeing the subjects of photos as victims, they are seen as success stories. While the montage is constructed in a similar fashion in both ads, the difference in meaning is created with the text, vocal delivery of the announcer, and music. Bleak vocal tones correspond with the sad music in the Romney ad, whereas, an optimistic vocal tone with bright musical chords creates positive feelings for Obama. Broadly speaking, when montage is combined with pacing, lighting, dissolves, and slow motion the viewer sees the unfolding story with more empathy.

Incongruity of voice track and pictures to alter meaning is a common tactic employed by ad creators. The combination of these two elements is perhaps the clearest example of deception because it combines two disparate ideas to alter meaning. When graphics are added to the voice/picture incongruity, the overall effect is powerful. For example, the combination of a smiling photo with damning narration and graphics of a fractured dollar bill revealing out of control spending allows the ad's target to come across as carelessly indifferent.

Beyond pointing out these specific and recurring video style techniques, this paper also contributes to our understanding of framing theory. In one sense, every TV ad

contains different frames to project meaning. Knowing how those frames are expressed in an ad gives us a blueprint for understanding an ad. For example, one of the findings of this paper is that the visual and aural dimensions of an ad amplify the given frame. In “Prairie Fire,” the superimposition on the horizon of fire and smoke convincingly amplifies the problem piece of Entman’s four step framing process. Words alone would not have the same effect. Likewise, the music serves as a mnemonic aural framing device. For one, it helps reinforce the problem by creating an emotional tone of impending doom. Furthermore, the music amplifies the moral evaluation of Obama as a malevolent perpetrator of the growing debt. The consonant music and flattering picture of Romney at the end of the ad establish Romney as the remedy for the debt.

While the visual and aural frames in an ad tell us how to think about a given candidate or issue, the text provides context and complements the other dimensions. For example, the distorted color of red fire and smoke helps to frame the words “prairie fire of debt” and provides a visual frame of reference for the impending disaster. The pacing of this ad helps to articulate the evaluation portion of framing theory by evoking the sense of urgency and inevitability of Obama’s spending. The dimensions of music, special effects, pacing, and vocal delivery all combine to amplify each step in Entman’s framing process.

This study found that priming is at work in most TV ads. Through the use of aural and visual techniques certain ideas about candidates are brought to the forefront, becoming the criteria for evaluating the candidate. In the ad, “Challenges” a series of still photos of Americans manifesting success became the criteria for judging Obama. The various photos of the Americans, shown from behind, put the viewer in the scene.

By participating in the success of these Americans, the viewer is encouraged to have a favorable view of Obama.

In addition to further developing framing theory, this study also builds on schema theory. Schemata are bits of information humans use to organize their environment and give meaning to it. This study identified picture and sound dimensions to give viewers a point of reference to understand the ads. This study found the schemas exploited in TV ads typically pre-date the ad. That is, ad creators, using aural and visual techniques, exploited preconceived notions viewers had about candidates. The Obama campaign repeatedly invoked schemas about Romney being an out of touch millionaire who does not care about ordinary Americans. Thus, the ads did not provide new information, but rather repeated ideas about candidates that were there prior to the ads' broadcast. Ad creators manipulated visual and aural dimensions to bring out the preexisting schemas and make them more prominent in the viewer's mind. For example, in "My Job" Romney's own words were skillfully revealed and emphasized with big bold lettering to reinforce the preconception of the uncaring politician. Likewise, the Romney campaign used schemata, in the form of negative stereotyping, to exploit preexisting views about dark skinned people. Again, visual and aural techniques, such as the use of black and white, voice and picture distortion, worked together to amplify these schemas and make them memorable.

TV ad production techniques, established over 60 years of presidential electioneering, act to muddle up important issues and ideas. The voter seldom sees a more nuanced view of reality that could inform his or her vote. An over simplified cause and effect is a primary tool of the ad creator to deny thoughtful discourse. It also has the

effect of assigning a disproportionate share of blame to an ad target. This was evident in one ad where Romney's wealth was shown as the reason for his views on the size of classrooms and his alleged disdain for education. The result of his tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans was cast as the motivation for his education policies. While his opponents were eager to make the connection, any nuance and complexity about tax breaks were ignored. Likewise, in several other ads, ad creators used a cause and effect to over-simplify reality with the purpose of misleading the public about who is responsible for the nation's debt. Truthfully, Congress authorizes spending *not* the president. The president plays an important role in the process in that he proposes a budget which Congress then accepts, rejects, or modifies. The president can sign, table, or veto the final budget. A 30 second ad is hardly enough time to present issues in all their complexity. In a different misleading TV ad, viewers are told there is an explicit connection between Romney's refusal to release his tax returns beyond two years and his proposal for an across the board tax cut for all. Voice/picture incongruency, combined with an oversimplified cause and effect, suggest Romney himself thinks his tax plan is secretive and bizarre.

The rapid advancement of sophisticated technology means editing techniques can be easily concealed (Kaid, 1996). For example, some might not notice the use of black and white coloration to suggest anger and fear. The viewer is left to the whims of political calculators motivated not so much by the benevolent forces of honest civil discourse but by the exigencies of needing to win an election. The purpose of creating ads that act on the sub-conscious level is twofold: to obstruct normal human reasoning

that might lessen the ads' effectiveness, and to establish an emotional tone or "gut" feeling, such as fear or ridicule and to associate the feeling with a candidate.

Limitations

A qualitative study depends heavily on one's well-reasoned judgment. This approach is an effective way to read between the lines of an ad to find deeper meanings. However, future researchers, using a quantitative approach, might look at TV ads through the lens of measureable data, which could bear investigative fruit in ways a qualitative analysis cannot. Future researchers might also consider the 2012 ads in terms of their effects on the voters. Do frames last in the viewer's mind, or are the effects temporary? Do frames change perception or simply reinforce it? Finally, future studies could take a closer look at the ad creator's intent when manipulating visual and aural techniques to construct meaning.

Research Beneficiaries

This research has numerous potential beneficiaries. The primary beneficiary of this analysis will be the voter. The voter can utilize this analysis as a template for an understanding of the distortion of political information. This may lead to a more informed, thoughtful, and cautious voter. Voters who are aware of how others are attempting to influence them in their perception of candidates can better defend themselves against manipulative aural and visual tactics found in ads. With cognitive intervention, a voter can ask questions about the message, ignore it if necessary, or reframe the information in a way that is more accurate. Voters can influence how ads are produced by expressing their disdain for certain visual and aural tactics. This research

purports to facilitate a richer, deeper and more accurate understanding the nature of the messages received. More rigorous democratic discourse may result from this research.

Future scholars, who will have a more concise framework for understanding ads, will also benefit. Seeing ads through the lens of specific visual and aural dimensions will provide a vocabulary that other scholars can incorporate into their scholarship. This paper builds on other scholars' work and allows for future scholars to elaborate on the process behind constructing meaning through TV ads.

Finally, an equally important goal was to provide information to journalists who seek to report on presidential advertising. According to Dr. Bob Rudd (personal communication, February 13, 2013), journalism tends to focus on the words of ads not the visual/aural strategies being used. This paper offers journalists an additional analytical lens through which they can see the ad strategy being applied, which can be utilized to expose those methods in the media.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

The system of TV advertising, developed over 80 years, is wrought with challenges. When robust public speech to gain the consent of the informed is partially dependent upon self-interested political elites, a more enlightened public discourse may be difficult to achieve. The primary finding of this research is that presidential TV ads do not rise to a level of a well-reasoned discussion worthy of a strong democracy. Given America's expansive view of freedom of expression, ad creators have tremendous leeway in passing on ideas about candidates to millions of potential voters through TV ads. This freedom has the potential to enlighten the electorate, promote a positive world view, strengthen one's feelings of pride, and provide important information. In addition, these freedoms are performed without having to get approval from the government or the opposition candidate.

Ad creator freedom can lead to some challenges. The voter is at the mercy of the ad creator who distorts reality by manipulating visual and aural techniques. Since the television medium is one-way communication, there is little opportunity for rebuttal or feedback. When voters hear distorted sounds and see distorted black and white pictures of Barack Obama, the voters must rely only on their ability to understand negative racial stereotyping and compensate for it in their evaluation of Obama. This type of proactive intellectual intervention is simply not undertaken as most voters may be unwilling to do the heavy lifting of personal research which is necessary to find the truth about a

candidate. As Phillip Converse (1964) stated, “Large portions of an electorate do not have meaningful beliefs, even on issues that have formed the basis for intense political controversy among elites for substantial periods of time” (as cited in Callaghan & Schnell, 2005, p. 104). The lack of thoughtful interest on the part of the voter is one challenge but another one is how TV ads offer little information for voters.

By condensing a given issue debate into a handful of themes, the media create an atmosphere in which citizens believe they possess full information about the issue. In reality, they may know very little about it but may be less inclined to seek out more information. (Callaghan & Schnell, 2005, p. 187)

One area that can help stimulate a healthy competition over political ideas is a more educated electorate. As voters are educated, the process will invariably lead to asking questions regarding the ad creator’s motivation for manipulating visual and aural techniques, whether the manipulation of information is presented fairly and accurately, and who stands to benefit from the manipulation. These are questions that can be discussed in the context of media literacy courses taught in public schools and universities. This would lead students and teachers to a better understanding of how meaning is conveyed in ads.

Framing theory is one important tool for understanding the meaning of ads. Framing theory can help to identify, explain, and expose distortion. Knowing that ad creators’ use frames to tell viewers how to think about a candidate in a highly polarized political culture, voters can cognitively intervene to question a frame, reject it, or apply a counter frame. The visual and aural language of TV ads offers the viewer a memorable, if occasionally distorted, way to see reality. The way forward for citizens and journalists is

to apply a rigorous standard of analysis to TV ads in order to better understand how visual and aural techniques are used to convey meaning. The result of this analysis will be a more lively democratic discourse that is richer in substance and fact.

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APPENDIX

Brief Description of TV Ads

The following brief textual descriptions of the ads from the 2012 presidential campaign will give the reader a cursory understanding of the specific ad characteristics absent the ability of the reader to see and hear the ads.

Mitt Romney Ads:

MR October 22nd, 2012, “Heal ed”

Under the headline, “while running for President in 2008,” this ad begins with a highly distorted, pixilated video of Barack Obama. Obama’s voice is highly distorted giving the effect of shouting as he talks about healing the planet and slowing the rise of the oceans. The viewer hears a jolting sound effect that is modified to create an echo effect followed by a news anchor intoning danger. In quick succession, the viewer sees Israeli Prime Minister forecasting doom about Iran’s nuclear weapon, a news anchor’s bleak description of the world situation, and reporter’s analysis. Interspersed throughout the ad, we see and hear shaky pictures and chaotic sounds from protesters in Syria and Egypt. After the rapid paced editing, we see a black screen with the question, “healed?” Repetitious harmonic patterns with an unclear resolution register throughout. Finally, we see Barack Obama secretly overheard saying to the Russian Prime minister, “after the election I’ll have more flexibility,” to which Prime Minister Medvedev says he understands and will convey that to President Vladimir Putin.

MR September 18th, 2012, “P rairie Fire”

Prairie fire begins with an ominous sounding chord that is sustained throughout the ad. We hear the voice of Romney describing a “prairie fire” of debt sweeping the country while his words are presented graphically to be read along with the words.

Beneath a red glowing haze of smoke, we see a sturdy farm house from a longer camera perspective, surrounded by a pasture full of hay bales. The bucolic, pastoral setting is the backdrop for the metaphor of fire engulfing the country. Between the pictures, we slowly dissolve to black for a few seconds to set up the next incendiary picture. This time, we see homes in a more urban setting, again, being threatened with fire. The words, “President Obama has been feeding the fire,” are complimented by more burning pictures, this time of a multi-level office building. In subsequent pictures the fire is getting closer until we can make out actual flames with Romney’s voice exclaiming, “He has spent more and borrowed more.” In the last picture the fire is apparently put out as we see smiling Mr. Romney in front of the American flag.

MR October 5th, 2012, “Facts a re C lea r”

The male announcer speaks with authority and suggests that what’s being said cannot be questioned. We see Obama in a still black and white photo looking down with an apparent smirk on his face. While the picture of Obama is a still, the image is manipulated to move about the screen to make way for large graphics that reinforce the message that Obama is to blame for the debt. The words change in size to emphasize certain ideas. Now we see a color photo of Obama, followed quickly by pictures of every other American president, as if revealed like pages being turned in a book. The announcer bleakly proclaims that Obama’s debt exceeds that of every other president combined. Graphically we see the numbers being added up to reflect the national debt. We see a close up of a fractured one dollar bill that magically turns from green to the color red as the Chinese flag fades in. This ad is book ended with the same still photos of Obama smiling. The music again provides little variety, with a repeated chord

juxtaposed with a discordant sound of some kind. The music is highly manufactured and electronically driven.

MR November 4th, 2012 “Bigger Better”

We begin this ad in West Chester, Ohio where a horizontally trucked camera shows the road lined with Romney supporters shouting, waving and holding signs. A feeling of expectation is created visually with shots of a huge crowd gathering. The voice over is that of Mitt Romney and taken from the speech he gave at West Chester. The vocal tonation is sure, confident, steady and unequivocal. Now we see a country or rock band performer gesticulating in front of an adoring crowd. The editing pace quickens with a variety of crowd shots and medium shots of prominent speakers at the rally. Now we begin to see Romney speaking on a large dais in front of a podium. On the words, “America is coming roaring back,” the audience roars in approval. In one odd shot, we hear the voice of Mitt Romney while we see him from behind where he’s not speaking. The ad is full of imagery such as smiling faces, people dressed up in revolutionary costumes, children laughing, flags and signs. The music throughout is upbeat. Major chords with a strong beat evoke feelings of enthusiasm and pride as we a close up of Romney at the end.

MR November 2nd, 2012, “More than a Number”

In “More than a Number” we hear someone who sounds like a newscaster in a distorted voice who is anticipating the jobs report. There is neither an announcer nor Romney’s voice in this ad. It is told solely through a black and white slow motion video of a “working” woman, with text describing her losing her 82 year old business. There’s

another slow motion picture of man who was laid off after 24 years then a mother with her son looking for work. Suddenly a loud chord introduces a graphic announcing 23 million people out of work. A new chord is introduced highlighting each of the following words “life, career, future.” Then abruptly we hear a joyful chord where the dissonance is resolved while we see a happy picture of Romney and Paul Ryan smiling and waving.

MR November 1st, 2012, “Secretary of Business”

The use of montage is the central identifying motif in “Secretary of Business.” Over ominous sounding piano notes, the viewer sees a still photo of Obama walking. This picture is followed by a succession of still photos separated by dissolves that reveal symbols of economic discontent, such as a shot a closed sign hanging from the door of a business and an empty warehouse. The announcer specifies a series of complaints about Obama. Movement is created within the still photos. This sets the stage for Romney’s appearance, smiling in front of adoring crowds. The mood becomes upbeat and inspirational as a counterpoint to the bleak intonations and photos representing a dreary business climate.

Barack Obama Ads:

BO September 27th, 2012, “My Job”

This ad begins with the words of Mitt Romney secretly recorded speaking to a group of donors in Florida. The picture shows a grainy Romney on a TV screen within the screen. The background is black and we see the selected words on the screen as he speaks them. Behind the words “dependent on government, and victims,” we slowly zoom in on still color photos of sympathetic looking people. Here are examples of

ordinary Americans who apparently represent the “47%” who are dependent on government. We see photos, for example, of veterans, laborers, minorities, and women. There is no announcer, rather Romney speaks for himself. The music is somber, monotone, slow moving and with little variety. It has no clear resolution which suggests an unsettled feeling.

BO September 12th, 2012 “W on’t S a y”

In “Won’t Say” we see a very grim looking Mitt Romney while an announcer claims that he won’t say what’s in his taxes. The graphic shows an envelope filled with tax forms stamped with the word, “confidential.” There is distinct sound effect of perhaps paper being slammed to a desk. We then see a photo with the word’s “Trump” on a plane in the back ground while, Romney looking downward, walks off a plane. The topic is tax breaks for “millionaires.” The announcer claims a non-partisan report says middle class taxpayers will pay more with the numbers, “\$2,000 more,” in bold yellow. Now we see pictures of homeowners, college graduates, and health care workers, apparently the people who would lose tuition, deductions and medical services under Romney’s tax plan. The last still photo is that of Romney looking rather odd, with a forced smile that is incongruent with the message.

BO October 27th, 2012 “30 S econds t o Name all of MR Mass Tax es and F ees”

In this voiceless parody, the music sets the whole scene with graphics and an old video of Romney claiming he didn’t raise taxes while he was governor of Massachusetts. The music is the famous “Can Can” tune by Jacques Offenback. After Romney’s statement we hear a large sound effect introducing a huge graphic claiming he *did* raise

fees on the middle class followed by an old video of Senator John McCain criticizing Romney. The musical pace quickens with the same piano notes jumping around in a playful manner with a bold headline asking, “Can we list all the taxes and fees (raised by Governor Romney) in 30 seconds?” With a clock in the bottom corner screen counting down from 30 seconds, smaller fonted statements scroll across the screen quickly from all directions listing all the fees supposedly raised by Romney. After a few moments we hear the familiar tune that suggests absurdity while specific fees are presented in bold black lettering. Each time we see a new fee, we hear the sound effect of a typewriter key loudly landing on its target. One is overwhelmed by the fees which are accompanied with the sounds of something crashing, a cow mooing and a siren in the background. As the clock ticks to zero, a large graphic states an answer to the original question, “NOPE, that was only half.”

BO October 13th, 2012 “Challenges”

In this ad narrated by Morgan Freeman, it opens with a black and white still photo of the Oval Office with slow zoom out followed by a black and white picture of Obama seen from behind and at low camera angle wearing a top coat being saluted as he enters a large arena suggestive of his inauguration. Now it goes to a color photo of Obama reading something at his desk. At about this moment, we hear a progression of slow, deliberate, soothing chords. While the announcer talks about “enemy’s coming to justice” we see from behind a group of cheering NYC firefighters reading a large neon sign proclaiming the death of Osama bin Laden. Now we see various pictures showing soldiers returning home, car assembly lines, men erecting the wall of a new home, and a flag. The voice is a familiar one from movies, with an inflection, pace, delivery, volume

and tone that projects a sense of calm disposition. A chordal resolution ends the production.

BO October 9th, 2012 “C ’mon Man”

The voice over in the “C’mon Man,” is strikingly different from most other announcers in that it is highly informal and conversational. It is higher pitched and much less sober. We see, rather inexplicably, splashes of different colors moving across the screen. We listen to the announcer talk about Romney’s two degrees from Harvard to introduce what the ad says are Romney’s plans to cut education. Then we see newspaper clippings, suggesting more awful things to happen to education, followed by the announcer exasperatingly saying “C’mon Man.” With see animated blue waves filling the bottom of the screen with an expensive yacht with the graphics proclaiming tax breaks for the wealthy. There are more splashes of color moving across the screen. Now the voice introduces a photo of Obama with children and his plans for energy and education juxtaposed with one last picture of Romney getting off that plane with “Trump” in the background. The graphics are varied in size and quite large at times, and at one point take up most of the screen. The ad is set to a rock and roll beat with a dominant guitar expressing a familiar musical pattern.